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CROSS CURRENTS

WASHINGTON'S CONTRATORTIONS

BY HOLLY SKLAR

BY THE time Congress voted \$100 million for the contra war in the summer of 1986, the public rationales of arms interdiction, freedom fighting, and pressuring Nicaragua to negotiate had all been shredded. The \$100 million was a de-facto pardon for Administration deceit, contra atrocities, Phoenix-style assassinations, CIA terrorist manuals, the mining of Nicaragua's harbors, sabotage of the Contadora treaty (which Nicaragua had agreed to sign as early as 1984), and violations of international law condemned by the World Court. Congress voted knowing that most Americans were opposed to the policy of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government and that only U.S. combat troops could install the contras in power.

Washington is accustomed to making and unmaking governments in Central America. Around the time the elder Somoza became quisling-in-chief, U.S. Major General Smedley Butler, winner of two Congressional Medals of Honor, reflected on his thirty-three years in the Marine Corps: "I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the bankers." "I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street," Butler attested. "I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912...I helped make Honduras 'right' for American fruit companies in 1903..."

The United States has gone on "purifying" Nicaragua and other countries under the guise of anti-communism and, more recently, counter-terrorism. With the exception of Cuba, where it tried and failed, and Nicaragua, where it is still trying, the United States has overthrown every populist government and many reformist ones that have appeared in the Western hemisphere.

Blaming Nicaragua for provoking U.S. intervention is like blaming women for rape: They flaunt their independence. They practice promiscuous non-aligned relations. They hang out with the wrong crowd. They wear revealing green fatigues. They say no to the contras, but they mean yes. Somehow, Nicaragua has asked for it. What passes for debate in Congress is largely an argument over how much Nicaragua asked for it, and what's the best way to give it to them.

Iran-Contraquake

JUST WEEKS after Eugene Hasenfus's smoking plane roused Congress from its oversight stupor, the 1986 election gave the Democrats control of the Senate and put the Reagan Administration on the unfamiliar political defen-

sive—just as the Iran arms deal was exposed to the world. Following the principle that the best defense is a good offense, the Administration announced the Iran-contra diversion on national television and fingered Oliver North as the culprit, with John Poindexter as his unwitting accomplice. The White House wanted to preempt the Watergate-style charges of cover-up that would arise if reporters and investigators successfully followed the money in the seemingly separate Iran and contra scandals to their intersection at North and Secord.

By the time of the diversion announcement on November 25, much of the paper trail had been shredded, burned or altered. Whether accidental or contrived, the discovery and revelation of the diversion memo allowed the Administration to shape the Iran-contragate agenda around one central question: What did the President know of the diversion and when did he know it?

If the congressional *Iran-Contra Report* is correct, the diversion itself was not that significant financially; at least \$3.8 million of the total \$16.1 million in Iran arms sales profits were used by the Enterprise (managed by intermediaries Richard Secord and Albert Hakim) for contra assistance. That is far less than the contraband solicited from Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and other tributaries; contributed by such patrons of the Right as Joseph Coors, Ellen Garwood, and Nelson Bunker Hunt; or diverted through "humanitarian" assistance, military exercises in Honduras, and programs such as Operation Elephant Herd which laundered contra military equipment from the Pentagon through the CIA. And it is far less than alleged revenues from the contra drug connection, the subject that dared not speak its name at the Iran-contra hearings.

The impeachment question rose and fell on the search for the diversion "smoking gun," rather than broader issues of law and constitutional responsibility. Ronald Reagan would not go the way of Richard Nixon. This time, the "fall-guy plan" worked. It's alleged ringleader, William Casey, was conveniently dead.

The fall-guy plan worked although Poindexter winked that the diversion buck stopped with Reagan, even as he claimed it for himself. Poindexter testified that Reagan would have approved of the diversion as an "implementation" of his policies, but he chose to "insulate" Reagan "from the decision and provide some future deniability for the President if it ever leaked out." When questioned about

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White House statement insisting that Reagan would not have authorized the diversion, Poindexter replied, "I understand that he [the President] said that, and I would have expected him to say that. That is the whole idea of deniability."

Watchdogs With Blinders

IN HIS study of the 1975 Church Committee inquiry on the CIA, *A Season of Inquiry*, former committee investigator Loch Johnson quotes Senator Lowell Weicker's (R-CT) lament: "We have had weak sight, we have had blind sight, we have had hindsight, we have had short sight, but we have not had oversight." Weicker made that remark during the May 1976 debate over new intelligence oversight legislation.

Years later, little has changed, and not all of the changes have been positive. As Representative Norman Mineta (D-CA), a charter member of the House Intelligence Committee, quipped in 1983, "We are like mushrooms. They [the CIA] keep us in the dark and feed us a lot of manure."

When the klieg lights were turned on, the memories of government officials and their intermediaries often turned off. "A mass epidemic of amnesia...seemed to sweep Washington in the summer of 1975," Johnson writes. "Witnesses with vaunted reputations for clear minds mysteriously could no longer remember essential details of operations in which they had been intimately involved." So it was in 1987. Poindexter apparently held the convenient amnesia record, but witness after witness said "I don't recall," "I can't recollect," on matters large and small. A joke made the rounds during the Tower Board investigation: "What did the President forget and when did he forget it?"

But there's a better question. What did Congress want to know and when did it want to know it? The Iran-contra hearings made the Church, Pike and Watergate hearings look like the Inquisition.

For all the valuable information uncovered, much more was covered up. The plot to kill Eden Pastora, which left numerous guerrillas and reporters dead and wounded from a press conference bombing, was treated as if it were baseless slander (meanwhile Robert Owen is trying to selectively plead the Fifth Amendment on this and other matters in the lawsuit filed by the Washington-based Christic Institute on behalf of Tony Avirgan, a reporter wounded in the bombing, and his wife and colleague Martha Honey). There was no in-



quiry into assassination programs against Sandinista officials and community leaders. There was no investigation of government and right-wing surveillance, infiltration, and harassment of groups and individuals opposed to the wars in Central America. (See Sklar, "Who's Who," this issue.) Inquiry into the contra drug connection was short-circuited; Senator John Kerry (D-MA) and Rep. William Hughes (D-NJ) are pursuing the matter in the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations and the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime. (See Leslie Cockburn's book on the drug connection, *Out of Control*, reviewed in this issue.)

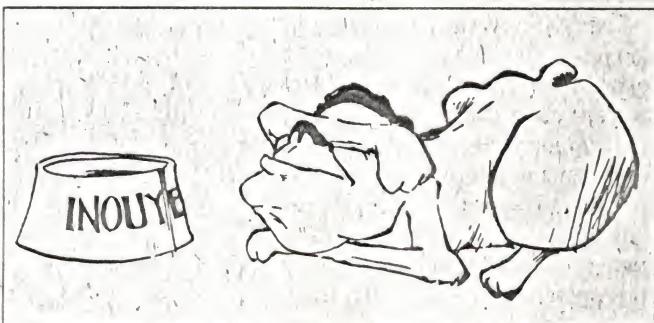
Incredibly, regarding Nicaragua, the Iran-contra hearings did more damage than good: they served as a national soap box for pro-contra disinformation. As contra leader Adolfo Calero put it, "We came out smelling like a rose." The chief crime, it appeared, was that the Enterprisers had pocketed hefty profits while the poor contras went without.

The hearings often degenerated into a one-sided contra aid debate. A two-sided debate would have been stacked in favor of the contras; 17 out of 26 committee members had voted for the \$100 million. (See Sklar, "Who's Who," in the Jan. issue.) To make matters worse, contra supporters won not by advantage, but by default. Contra opponents complied unilaterally with a prior committee agreement to focus on process, not policy. They preached platitudes, such as "the

ends don't justify the means," belied by their own records. (How many backed the bombing of Libyan civilians ostensibly to combat terrorism?) Contra supporters argued passionately that the ends sometimes justified the means, and they used an unchallenged, distorted version of events to insist that national security was at stake.

The combination of one-sided debate and Ollie-mediamania had an instant impact on public opinion. During the hearings, the mother of a friend asked me what had changed in Nicaragua? Had the Nicaraguan government taken a sharp turn for the worse? She assumed it had, because she heard only bad things about Nicaragua and plenty of praise for the contras. She wasn't alone. The polls registered a significant increase in the percentage of Americans favoring contra aid.

While the polls reverted to large majorities opposing contra assistance, there were important lingering effects. The pro-contra grassroots base was rejuvenated. The Big Lies enunciated during the hearings are resonating more loudly in pro-contra campaigns. And senators and congressmen (they were



all men) showed that even upon their loftiest perch they could be cowed by an anti-communist stampede.

The \$100 million kept flowing throughout the hearings, and more was to come. Amid the hearings in May, the House rejected Rep. Barbara Boxer's (D-CA) amendment requiring the President to certify that no roads, airports or other facilities improved as part of U.S. military maneuvers in Honduras would be used to support the contras. In June it passed Rep. Robert Walker's (R-PA) ambiguous amendment to restrict travel by American citizens to Central America "for the purpose of helping military operations of the Sandinista government." That could mean volunteers who work on development projects in Nicaragua's war zones (like Ben Linder, who the contras assassinated) or Witness for Peace activists who try to act as a non-violent deterrent by visiting areas of likely attack. With the public phase of hearings behind it, Congress authorized, in September, the first \$3.5 million in new installments on contra aid.

The Myopic Majority

THE CONGRESSIONAL inquirers insulated the CIA, FBI, Justice and other departments from serious investigation and accountability. They put a handful of men under a microscope and wore blinders to avoid looking at the institutions they served. They treated the Enterprise as an aberration rather than as the latest mutation of covert warfare. And in the end, their recommendations were, to borrow Senator Rudman's term for the minority report, pathetic.

They opted to fine-tune the instruments of covert action while reaffirming covert action's legitimacy. One of their recommendations for the NSC, "that Presidents adopt as a matter of policy the principle that the National Security Adviser...should not be an active military officer," has already been ignored with the appointment of Lt. General Colin Powell. His deputy is none other than John Negroponte, former ambassador to Honduras and chief proconsul of the contra war.

In 1975 the late James Angleton, former chief of CIA Counterintelligence, told Church Committee investigator Loch Johnson that the task of the counterintelligence officer was to construct a "wilderness of mirrors" in which the opponent would be forever lost and confused. Not accommodating enough, Congress was treated as an opponent.

Today's myopic majority in Congress are torn between their desire to tame that artificial wilderness and their desire to preserve it as a supposed barrier against perceived enemies abroad.

The Iran-contra committees' recommendations follow from their assumptions and conclusions. "Covert operations," states the *Iran-Contra Report*, "are a necessary

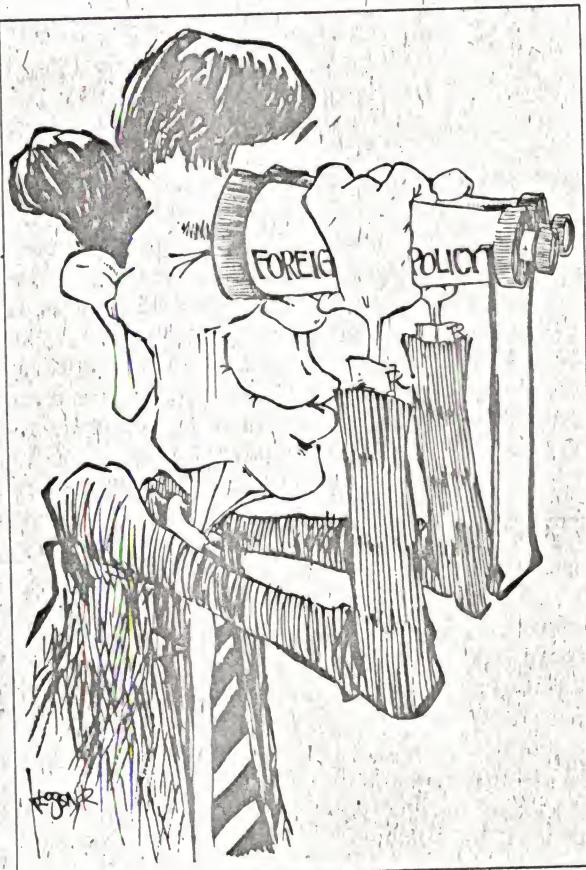
component of our nation's foreign policy." The records of the House and Senate intelligence committees are testimony to that. As Chairman Lee Hamilton (D-IN) said at the conclusion of North's testimony, "During my six years on the Intelligence Committee, over 90 percent of the covert actions that were recommended to us by the President were supported and approved. And only the large-scale paramilitary operations, which really could not be kept secret, were challenged."

"Covert operations," the committees conclude, "are compatible with democratic government if they are conducted in an accountable manner and in accordance with law. Laws mandate reporting and prior notice to Congress. Covert action Findings are not a license to violate the statutes of the United States." But they are, as Congress knows, a license to violate international law.

The *Iran-Contra Report* characterizes covert action as "an attempt by a government to influence political behavior and events in other countries in ways that are concealed." As defined in President Truman's 1948 National Security Council Directive, NSC 10/2, covert actions are: "propaganda; economic warfare; preventative direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups; and support of indigenous anti-communist elements." What makes those actions covert is their clandestine nature and the "plausible denial" of U.S. government responsibility if uncovered.

The *Iran-Contra Report* perpetuates the myth that such covert actions as "subversion against hostile states" do not constitute war: "Paramilitary covert actions are in the 'twilight area' between war, which only Congress can declare, and diplomacy, which the President must manage. This type of activity is especially troublesome as a constitutional separation of powers issue."

For these "lawmakers," it is not troublesome that covert action violates international law. But international law gives no state the right to "influence political behavior and events in other countries in ways that are concealed." Quite the contrary. The United Nations Charter states that "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state." The Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS) declares that "No State or group of states has the right to intervene directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever in the internal or external affairs of any other state. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed force but also any other form of interference or attempted threat against the per-



sonality of the State or against its political, economic, and cultural elements." The only exception to the principle of nonintervention is the right of self-defense, which is limited to acts of self-defense against an armed attack. The United States has no right to take military, paramilitary, or any other covert action to "influence political behavior and events" it doesn't like.

In the warped value system that rules Congress, it is the diversion of a few million dollars from Iran to the contras and lying to Congress that are the real crimes, not acts of aggression against Nicaragua which have been declared illegal by the World Court. The foreign policy problem we face is not one of oversight. It is one of vision.

Peace Panic

JUST AS the White House was repairing Iran-contraquake damage in Washington, an after-shock rolled through Central America. What began early in 1987 as a U.S.-Costa Rican initiative to supplant Contadora and isolate Nicaragua became a Central American peace plan that isolated the Reagan Administration. Working on the assumption that the contra cause was doomed in Central America, if not in Washington, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias pressed his neighbors to write their own ending to the region's conflicts.

Appearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee last July 9, Special Envoy Philip Habib was asked what the United States would do if the Central Americans approved the Arias proposal without the (pro-contra) changes wanted by the U.S. "It can't happen," Habib responded.

Having failed to sabotage the plan with de facto killer amendments, the Administration tried to preempt it with the so-called Reagan-Wright plan. As interpreted by the administration, that plan mandated a gradual reduction of contra aid "as the resistance forces are integrated into Nicaraguan society" and required Nicaragua to hold new elections well before the end of President Ortega's term in 1990. "If the White House had thought the plan was acceptable" to Nicaragua, said one Administration official, "they would have changed it."

On August 7, the Central Americans sidestepped the Reagan ploy and signed a peace accord based on the Arias proposal and rooted in the sovereign spirit of Contadora. The Central American peace accord requires simultaneous measures to halt outside assistance to insurgent forces (except for repatriation or relocation aid) and implement cease-fires, amnesty, dialogue with "all unarmed political groups of internal opposition and with those who have availed themselves of the amnesty," and democratization (e.g. an end to states of emergency).

House Speaker Jim Wright made a quick escape from the trap the Administration was springing and embraced the Central American peace plan. Reagan officials went into a peace panic before settling on a new gimmick for contra aid: it was "an insurance policy" to see that Nicaragua carried out all the provisions of the peace plan—as defined and imagined by the Administration.

In the United States, the plan has been widely interpreted to conform to the interventionist agenda. The requirement to cut off U.S. aid to the contras and close contra base camps in Honduras has been ignored or treated as something optional. Nicaragua, meanwhile, is seen through special bifocals. Whatever it does to comply with the plan appears small and

fuzzy. Whatever is left incomplete, pending the required simultaneous halt to contra aid, overshadows everything else.

United States assistance to the contras violates the peace accord every day. Administration officials acknowledge they are only paying the accord lip service so Congress will shell out more aid, sharing in the pretense that the peace plan and contra aid are compatible. On October 7, Reagan told the OAS, "I make a solemn vow: as long as there is breath in this body, I will speak and work, strive and struggle for the cause of the Nicaraguan freedom fighters." Still, the dominant theme in mainstream commentary is "Can Nicaragua be trusted?"

On November 5, the original deadline for compliance with the peace accord, the House voted the contras another \$3.2 million in funding through mid-December. On December 12, the Democratic-controlled Senate voted about \$16 million in ostensibly non-military aid to take the contras through February 1988. Senators defeated, 56 to 38, a proposal that would have withheld the funds until a cease-fire was in effect or until a majority of the five Central American presidents said the aid was consistent with the peace process. The aid "is clearly not acceptable," declared House Speaker Wright.

It was time for the Administration to show its ace: Nicaraguan defector Major Roger Miranda.

Mirandized

THE MIRANDA affair gave a convenient name to a rule long employed by the Administration in its dealings with Congress: You have the right to vote for contra aid. If not, everything we say the Nicaraguans do can and will be used against you. Congress generally pleads guilty and bargains for a lower contra aid sentence, which the Nicaraguans get to serve.

The Miranda affair was a propaganda campaign exposed even as it unfolded. Miranda served, as did Ortega's Moscow visit in 1985, to cover a congressional retreat that was already underway. The Central Americans had led the Democrats safely through the Reagan ambush to the higher ground of peace. The Democrats began retreating, even before the Administration regrouped, and kept running even after it was clear the Administration was firing blanks.

Major Roger Miranda was a chief personal assistant to Nicaraguan Defense Minister Humberto Ortega. When he left Nicaragua on October 25, he was, reported Alfonso Chady, in the *Miami Herald*, apparently "a CIA mole." When Miranda's carefully-timed charges were first reported on December 13 and 14, the impression was left that Nicaragua was building a standing army of up to 600,000 and engaging in a pro-Soviet military build-up violating the spirit, if not the letter, of the peace accord.

When inconvenient information was reported, it was buried. For instance, Miranda's contention that the reserves and civilian militia would grow to 500,000 while the regular army shrinks from 80,000 to 70,000 was buried in the seventeenth paragraph of William Branigin's December 13 *Washington Post* article. James LeMoine's December 16 *New York Times* piece, reporting President Ortega's explanation that Nicaragua would maintain a Swiss-like reserve system because it was "not defended by any military pact" and could not rely on trust in U.S. intentions, along with his

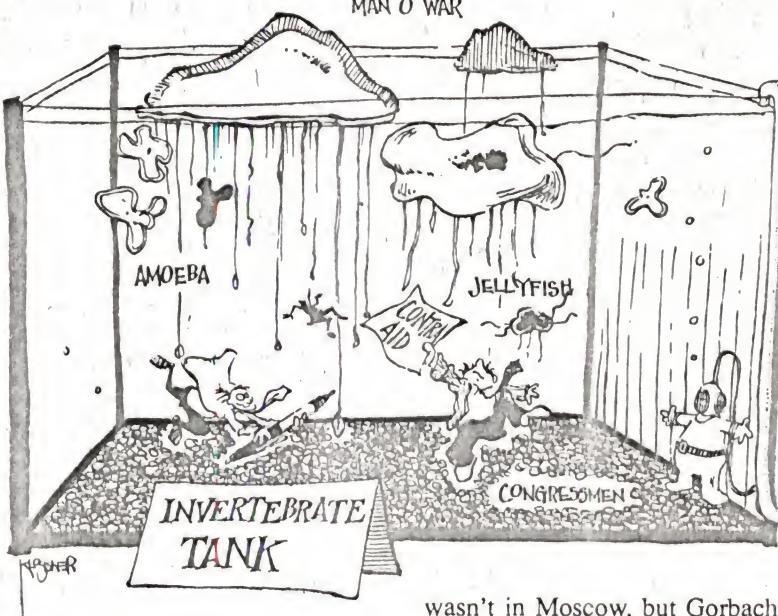
statement that "we are willing to discuss limits on weapons and men in the armed forces" if the United States "stops its aggression" against Nicaragua, was titled "Nicaragua to Keep Big Military Force, Its Leader Declares."

On December 18, as the story moved off the *Times'* front page, Richard Halloran quoted a senior Defense Department official as describing Miranda's allegation of Nicaraguan plans to attack Honduras in the event of a U.S. invasion as "informed speculation within the realm of possibility." Halloran's December 19 article deflating the document supposedly providing the basis for Miranda's charges rated page 20: "A Nicaraguan military plan made public by the Defense Department here portrays a haphazardly organized and equipped Sandinista armed force that is short of not only weapons and ammunition but also basics like food, clothing, and medicine." It indicated, writes Halloran, "that the Russians have been erratic and unreliable suppliers." It contradicts the Administration assessment of "the Sandinista Government as bent on offensive military operations intended to expand Nicaraguan power over neighbors." The weapons mentioned in the plan are primarily defensive.

The story moved back to the *New York Times* front page the next day under the headline "Arias Criticizes Nicaraguan Plan For More Troops." The article, by David E. Pitt, could have been titled "Arias Criticizes US Plan To Aid Contras." Arias is quoted saying: "External aid to all rebel forces must be discontinued. Irregular forces are an obstacle in the road to democracy. They cannot be regarded as vultures of war, remaining intact, while they wait for peace efforts to fail." Those blunt words appear in the continuation of the article on page 20.

Even as Miranda's credibility came quickly undone, the disinformation campaign served its purpose. The Big Lie of Nicaragua as a conniving Soviet military proxy was reinforced yet again in the headlines. Wright pinned the Democratic retreat on the Nicaraguans. "The Sandinistas," he complained, "have had a history of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory."

On December 20, Congress saved itself from the Terror of the Holiday Veto, and agreed with the White House on a 1988 catch-all appropriations measure that included \$8.1 million in funding for the contras and provisions worth up to \$8.8 million more. The supposedly non-military package included \$3.6 million for contra food, clothing, shelter, and medical supplies and \$4.5 million for transportation; the transportation money could be used for mixed deliveries of previously purchased arms and ammunition. There was more: the Defense Department would provide the CIA with sophisticated electronic equipment free-of-charge for contra supply planes to jam Nicaraguan radar and combat anti-



aircraft missiles, an estimated value of \$3 million to \$6 million. And Pentagon insurance of about \$2.8 million would cover contra supply planes against loss or damage.

The day before the congressional deal, Pamela Constable reported in the *Boston Globe* that television stations in El Salvador and Honduras had aired a CIA-produced videotape of Miranda embracing the contra cause.

When Miranda made his embargoed debut with the press, Ortega

wasn't in Moscow, but Gorbachev was in Washington. According to the Soviets, Gorbachev had suggested a reciprocal agreement whereby the Soviets curtailed arms shipments to Nicaragua and the U.S. cut off aid to the contras in the context of the regional peace plan. Reagan hadn't pursued the idea or discussed Miranda's charges of a peace-plan-be-damned military build-up.

As the *New York Times* reported it on December 17, when asked why Reagan had not confronted Gorbachev with the charged Nicaraguan military build-up, a State Department official replied: "You don't understand. Miranda was for the press and Congress, not for Gorbachev."

Destabilization's Many Forms

WASHINGTON IS trying to sabotage the peace plan by pressuring its client states to reinterpret the peace plan's provisions such that Nicaragua can be found in non-compliance even as support for the contras continues to flow. Even if the Administration cannot force the Central Americans to kill their own plan—and it probably cannot—it can influence Congress to ignore the plan's procedures for verifying compliance and rely on self-fulfilling prophets of failure in the U.S. government and among the contras and pro-U.S. internal opposition.

The resupplied contras have been directed to step up military attacks, mainly to impress Congress, while seeking political legitimacy through cease-fire charades. Washington has no intention of letting the cease-fire talks succeed, short of a Nicaraguan surrender to power-sharing with the contras.

Congress will probably appropriate more contra aid through approval of the Administration request or some type of compromise—disguised in whole or in part with labels such as "humanitarian" and "non-military." Already "non-military" has been redefined to include helicopters and aircraft defense systems. What's next? Guns shipped separately from bullets?

A complete aid cut-off (which isn't later reversed) is most likely in the House, much less in the Senate. Nor is an alternative that provides funds only to resettle contras in exile under amnesty in Nicaragua. As political analyst William Leogrande points out, "Jim Wright believes the political co-

of fighting contra aid outweighs the benefit of winning. He doesn't want to divide conservative southern Democrats from liberals in an election year when the Democrats believe they have to carry the South to win."

In the unlikely event of a sustained Congressional cut-off, the Administration could enlist another country to run the contra war. Or it could claim that contra "pressure" worked and declare peace. But under a peace facade, Washington would likely carry out a new destabilization campaign involving terrorism, sabotage, and diverse forms of economic, psychological, and political warfare in which the internal opposition becomes the main counterrevolutionary vehicle.

The objective could be to provoke a Nicaraguan crackdown that could be used to justify rejuvenation of the contra war, economic sanctions and/or a direct U.S. invasion. Or it could be designed to pave the way for a Sandinista electoral defeat in the national elections scheduled for 1990. The model for the latter strategy is the 1972-80 destabilization of the Manley government in Jamaica, where a combination of economic boycott, decapitalization, austerity (in which the International Monetary Fund played a critical role), media manipulation, sabotage, and violence rolled back the government's social programs, eroded its credibility and popular support, and resulted in its electoral loss to the U.S.-backed party of Edward Seaga.

In his book, *Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery*, former Prime Minister Michael Manley compares Jamaica's destabilization with Chile's; he quotes Regis Debray's description of Chile on the eve of Allende's overthrow:

"Consequently what developed was a rampant crisis, insidious, intangible, and invisible, responsibility for which could never be laid at the proper door. The enemy advanced in disguise. From without it took the form of processions of 'housewives,' and from within it wore the mask of 'natural catastrophe'—of inflation, poverty, the transport strike, locked petrol pumps, and rationing. Anonymous and faceless, parliamentary obstruction, by preventing tax reform and refusing to finance the social sector of the economy, forced more and more currency to be issued; omnipresent but fleeting; generalised and consequently depersonalised, there was stockpiling by shops, hoarding by customers, smuggling of goods out of the country, and a black market among the well-to-do; ramifying and secret, strike funds were supplied to the owners' associations by the CIA. Nowhere were there any identifiable enemies or targets."

Rampant crisis may be the future Washington has in store for Nicaragua—under Republicans or Democrats. Rampant crisis to deny the Nicaraguan government the benefits of peace and allow the U.S.-backed opposition to say, "see, it wasn't the war, it's Sandinista mismanagement that's responsible for the mess." Rampant crisis in the form of continued decapitalization and sabotage of energy, transport and communication facilities; CIA-orchestrated strikes; bribery of politicians; constant disinformation through *La Prensa* (following the examples of *El Mercurio* in Chile and *The Daily Gleaner* in Jamaica); destruction of food supplies and hoarding; terrorist violence; etc.

Unlike in Chile, Washington cannot count on a military coup because the Sandinistas control the army—something that U.S. proxies will try, but fail, to change under the guise of depoliticizing the armed forces. Washington can, however, sponsor an "electoral coup," as some have described events in Jamaica. But destabilization sealed by

electoral defeat would be far more difficult to orchestrate in Nicaragua where more people recognize the tactics of counterrevolution. The Manley government and its supporters were not defending a revolution (indeed, Manley, more moderate now, may be reelected in Jamaica without a repeat destabilization). In Nicaragua the opposition is more divided and the Sandinistas more united.

Nicaraguans have learned from the experiences of Chile and Jamaica, as they have learned from Cuba, Vietnam and Grenada. In surviving a new wave of destabilization, however, Nicaraguans will be forced to sacrifice more lives, more resources, more progress. It's a price they should not have to pay.

Last July, Rep. Lee Hamilton co-authored an obnoxious *New York Times* Op-ed, "A Strategy for Handling Nicaragua," with Viron Vaky, former Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs in the Carter Administration. They wrote: "If our interests require the overthrow of the Sandinistas, then we should overthrow them; if they do not, then we need a better policy to advance our interests."

"In our view," they opined, "only United States military force can remove the Sandinistas from power. But there is no convincing evidence that the threat they pose to American interests is so serious as to warrant the costs and consequences of such intervention.

"Rather, the Sandinista threat can be contained by a negotiated settlement enforced by United States power, including diplomatic and economic pressure. This is a more sustainable approach than a strategy that relies on the contras."

In this election year, all self-righteous interventionism, liberal or conservative, should be challenged. Politicians must be held accountable for the war on Nicaragua, as well as on other countries such as Angola. Let us set our sights on a new rainbow vision rooted in self-determination at home and abroad.

Z END

Holly Sklar's "Cross Currents" will appear in Z every other month.



"So the President tells me—If peace breaks out in Nicaragua, no problem! We'll just arrange a diversion to Iran."

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